

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

RSR-01 /095 W

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R 021726Z AUG 73

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 543

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

UNCLAS BELFAST 120

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT UK (NI)

SUBJECT: BELFAST PRESS REACTION TO INAUGURAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

REF: BELFAST 117 AND 119

SUMMARY BELFAST PRESS WAS UNANIMOUS IN ITS CRITICISM OF LOYALIST ACTIVITIES AT THE FIRST ASSEMBLY MEETING NEVERTHELESS, EXPRESSED CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM THAT THE ASSEMBLY WILL STILL WORK.

1. BELFAST TELEGRAPH, ORANGE LEANING, BUT LEAST IDENTIFICABLE OF LOCAL PRESS IN TERMS OF ORIENTATION AND MOST OBJECTIVE, SUMMED UP ITS VIEWS ON THE ASSEMBLY MEETING IN AN EDITORIAL ON AUGUST 1. "WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN AN HISTORIC DAY AT STORMONT YESTERDAY WAS TURNED INTO A SHAMEFUL DEBATE THAT IS BEST FORGOTTEN. THE MOST GENEROUS VIEW MIGHT BE THAT THE DISGRACEFUL SCENES WERE MERE VALVES OF PENT-UP PROTESTANT FEELINGS BURSTING. A MORE PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT A MINORITY OF MEMBERS DELIBERATELY TRIED TO WRECK WHAT THE MAJORITY OF ULSTER PEOPLE WANT TO SEE WORK. THE SENSE OF OUTRAGE WHICH ABOUNDED THIS MORNING MAY HELP TO BRING THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES CLOSER TOGETHER. THE DISSIDENTS ARE IN THE MINORITY. WHAT IS IMPORTANT NOW IS TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT TODAY'S HEADLINES ARE AN INJUSTICE TO THE MAJORITY OF

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ULSTER PEOPLE. THAT CAN BEST BE DONE BY THE OTHER PARTIES

TRYING ALL THE HARDER TO MAKE THE ASSEMBLY WORK."

2. IRISH NEWS GREEN-COLORED, NATIONALIST ORIENTATED, ON AUGUST 1 PESSIMISTICALLY DESCRIBED ASSEMBLY ACTIVITIES AS FOLLOWS. "YESTERDAY'S CHAOTIC DEVELOPMENT WAS REGARDED LAST NIGHT AS A SLEDGEHAMMER BLOW TO THE PROSPECTS OF THE NEW ASSEMBLY ESTABLISHING NORMALLY ACCEPTABLE POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE NEAR FUTURE." STILL THE IRISH NEWS DID EMPHASIZE THE ASSEMBLY SUCCEEDED IN COMPLETING THE TASK FOR WHICH THEY MET - THE ELECTION OF A PRESIDING OFFICER.

3. NEWS LETTER, PRO-UNIONIST, ORANGE-COLORED, DESCRIBED ON AUGUST 1 THE INAUGURAL MEETING AS FOLLOWS: "THE FIRST MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY ENDED ON A HIGHLY FARCICAL NOTE LAST NIGHT, AMID UPROAR, LOYALIST HARDLINERS TOOK OVER THE RUNNING OF THE PROCEEDINGS AND STAGED A 30-MINUTE "SIT-IN". IN AN EDITORIAL, THE NEWS LETTER SAID IT WAS REASONABLE THAT THE CRAIG-PAISLEY COALITION SHOULD PRESENT THEIR VIEW IN FORCEFUL TERMS. HOWEVER, IT MUST BE DEBATED WHETHER THE EXTREMES TO WHICH THEY RESORTED WERE EFFECTIVE. IN SPITE OF THE CONFUSION AND CHALLENGE TO MR. WHITELAW'S AUTHORITY, THE NEWS LETTER EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT THE ASSEMBLY ELECTED A PRESIDING OFFICER.  
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